UNITED
NATIONS

E

Economic and Social
Council

Distr.
GENERAL

E/CN.4/2002/NGO/21
25 January 2002

ENGLISH ONLY

COMMISSION ON HUMAN RIGHTS
Fifty-eighth session
Item 6 of the provisional agenda

RACISM, RACIAL DISCRIMINATION, XENOPHOBIA AND ALL FORMS OF DISCRIMINATION

Joint written statement* submitted by Centre Europe-Tiers Monde and World Federation of Democratic Youth, non-governmental organizations in general consultative status, and Nord-Sud XXI, a non-governmental organizations in special consultative status

The Secretary-General has received the following written statement which is circulated in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

[14 January 2002]

*This written statement is issued, unedited, in the language(s) received from the submitting non-governmental organization(s).

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ENG

1. We wish to congratulate the international community for convening the World Conference against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance (WCAR). We are pleased to note that the Conference had been a success in achieving one of its main objective by setting a political and moral framework to reactivate the world efforts to combat racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance anywhere they exist. We believe that the World Conference represents a turning point in the history of mankind and an important occasion in which a number of questions that underlay the progress of contemporary society were extensively discussed for the first time in an international gathering of this high profile. The Conference has also provided an opportunity for the most disadvantaged victims of racism and racial discrimination to raise their concerns and assert their human dignity. We salute the tireless efforts of all those who have worked so hard to ensure the success of this important Conference.

2. The conclusion of the WCAR signifies the beginning of ardent work to materialize its outcomes and objectives. A sustained and resourceful follow-up strategy is indispensable to implement the recommendations contained in this Declaration and Programme of Action. This is a tremendous task that requires the full involvement of all concerned stakeholders including national governments, international and regional organizations, NGOs and civil society groups in close partnership and collaboration. As racism and racial discrimination enjoy the notorious distinction of adaptability with the changing circumstances through time and geography there is a need for a shift in the methods used to address them from theoretical discussion to more practical response at all levels.

3. Determination and political will in the part of governments in both the developed and developing countries to do a lethal blow to racism and racial discrimination in all their forms and manifestation are crucial prerequisites to implement the provisions of the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action. The Commission on Human Rights has a particularly important role to play in this process especially in monitoring and scrutinizing follow-up measures undertaken by governments and other social actors to implement the commitment they made in Durban. In doing so we should always keep in mind that without effectively dealing with its past which is often at the root of the ongoing conflicts and injustices, the world community is in no position to build a future free from the ills of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance.

4. In contribution to the preparation of the World Conference, North-South XXI organized a three-day Seminar held in Dakar (Senegal) during the period 26th - 28th June 2001. The Seminar which was entitled the Gorée Initiative has brought together a number of intellectuals, politicians and human rights activists from Africa and other parts of the world including women and youth associations. The Gorée Initiative was organized as a joint NGO activity in cooperation with the Inter-African Union for Human Rights *(UIDH)*, and the *Rencontre Africaine pour la Defense des Droits de l'Homme (RADDHO)*. It has addressed the historical context within which the Slave Trade in particular the trans-Atlantic Slave Trade has devastated the African continent, the legacy left behind by this horrendous crime against humanity on the African continent and its peoples and suggested practical measures to help mitigate its long running effects.

5. A substantial step forward was the Conference's acknowledgment of the Slave Trade in particular the trans-Atlantic Slave Trade as a crime against humanity and that an apology is due to the African people for this human tragedy. The trans-Atlantic Slave Trade needs to be singled out as the most heinous crime against humanity in the history of mankind committed against a group of people by virtue of their colour or racial origin. It has played a notorious role in entrenching and

consolidating racism and racial discrimination against African people because of its long duration, large scope, racist nature and because of its economic and commercial dimensions as well as its legislative structure and organization. The impunity that surrounds the denial and non-recognition of responsibility for this human tragedy has substantially tormented the Africa continent and people of African descent in the Diaspora for many centuries. The outcomes of the World Conference should be translated in away that put an end to the victimization of African people as the first step to reconciling the human family.

6. We welcome the historical resolution adopted by the Sub-commission on the Promotion and Protection of Human Rights at its 53rd session {E/CN.4/SUB.2/RES/2001/1 dated 6th August 2001} by which the Sub-commission considered that " ... it is not possible to combat racism and racial discrimination, struggle against impunity or denounce the human rights violations which persist in the world without taking account of the deep wounds of the past." It has also considered " ... that the historic responsibility of the relevant powers towards the peoples whom they ... reduce to slavery should be the subject of solemn and formal recognition and reparation" and that " ... such recognition and reparation will constitute the beginning of a process that will foster the institution of an indispensable dialogue between peoples whom history has put in conflict for the achievement of a world of understanding, tolerance and peace." We strongly call upon the Commission on Human Rights to take immediate measures to initiate a process of reflection in a concerted fashion, on the appropriate procedure for guaranteeing the implementation of the Sub-commission's resolution.

7. However, we were disappointed to note that the Conference fell short of solemnly acknowledging the Slave Trade as a monstrous evil to which atonement and reparations of the damage done are long overdue. The just African demand for reparations should not be considered as a mere call for sanctions against the culprit nations or an appeal for handouts but rather it should be looked at as a repayment of the tremendous debt, which the Western world owes to Africa and a commitment to solve the acute problems of underdevelopment that the continent entailed as a result of the pillage of its human and material resources. The damage done to Africa by slavery, the trans-Atlantic Slave Trade and colonialism is irreparable yet the provision of reparations is a measure of protection for the future generations and a deterrent to ensure that such barbaric crimes will never be committed against the continent again. It is regrettable that the Conference has neglected calls by numerous NGOs and government delegations that practical measures such as the total and unconditional cancellation of Africa's external debts should be the first step in the right direction.

8. We share the Conference assertion that underdevelopment, poverty and its economic and social attributes were closely associated with racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance, and contribute to the persistence of racist attitudes and practices, which in turn generate more underdevelopment and poverty in a vicious circle. Globalization constitutes a powerful and dynamic force, which should be harnessed/utilized for the benefit, development and prosperity of all countries, without exclusion and that developing countries face special difficulties in responding to this central challenge. Its negative effects could aggravate, *inter alia*, poverty, underdevelopment, social exclusion, cultural homogenization and economic disparities which more often than not occur along racial lines and affected certain disadvantaged groups within and between societies.

9. We welcome the Conference's expressed determination to prevent and mitigate the negative effects of globalization and maximize its benefits through the strengthening of and enhancement of international cooperation to increase equality of opportunity for trade, economic growth and sustainable development, global communication through the use of new technologies and increased intercultural diversity. We support the Conference's recognition of the efforts of developing countries, in particular, the commitment and determination of the African leaders to seriously address the challenges they face through initiatives such as the New African Initiative - currently known as the New Partnership for African Development - and other innovative mechanism such as the World Solidarity Fund for the Eradication of Poverty. Also noteworthy was the commitment of the world community to integrate developing countries into the global economy and to resist their marginalization. Only through broad efforts to create a shared future based upon our common humanity and all its diversity, can globalization be made fully inclusive and equitable.

10. However, careful evaluation of the proposed measures will only conclude that they were not meant to transcend the existing framework for development aid policies under the shrinking resources and their reorientation in favour countries of economies in transition to the disadvantage of poor nations. It is regrettable that the proposed measures do not take into account the fact that the current international economic regime was built on a biased and discriminatory order that favours the expropriation and exploitation of resources of the poor underdeveloped countries to the benefit of rich nations thus consolidating and entrenching racism and racial discrimination. The Conference also fell short of setting a timetable for action to be taken by the world community in order to fully implement the proposed measures.